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## **PSC Rejects Interim Rate Increase Requested by Montana-Dakota Utilities**

**HELENA, Mont. –December 15, 2015–** On a 4-0 vote Tuesday, the Montana Public Service Commission rejected a \$10.9 million interim electricity rate increase requested by Montana-Dakota Utilities. The rate increase was requested as an interim adjustment that is part of a larger 21.1%, \$11.8 million increase under review in a contested rate case before the Commission.

Commissioner Travis Kavulla, R-Great Falls, whose district includes Dawson, Richland, McCone, Valley, Roosevelt, and Sheridan counties, said,

“The parties in this case are extremely far apart in the amount of increase they think is warranted. I think it is wise for the Commission to see this rate case through to the end before we make any decision on rates.”

The Commission will hold a hearing on the MDU electricity rate case February 9-12 in Glendive, MT, and make a final decision on the requested increase in March.

“We only have a few more months until we have completed the full rate case proceeding, and it just doesn’t make sense for this commission to allow a rate increase when there is still more information that needs to be gathered,” said PSC Chairman Brad Johnson.

“I can’t think of a worse Christmas present to give Montana’s MDU customers than for the PSC to say ‘merry Christmas, we’ve just given you a 20 percent rate increase,’ while we spend the next three months figuring this thing out,” said Commissioner Roger Koopman, R-Bozeman. “Many families are financially strapped this time of year. The last thing they need is a big hike in their power bills – a commodity they can’t do without.”

Commissioner Bob Lake, R-Hamilton, abstained from the vote, saying,

“Nobody wants to have a rate increase, but we as a commission have an obligation to make sure the utility has adequate funds to build, expand and maintain their operation to keep the power on, and that comes down to making some decisions that aren’t the most popular.”

Montana-Dakota Utilities serves approximately 26,000 electricity customers in eastern Montana, primarily in Custer, Richland and Dawson counties.

To view the MDU rate case docket, visit: <http://1.usa.gov/1QmJxDH>

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